

Committee on Resources

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WHY ADDITIONAL WATER STORAGE IS CRUCIAL TO THE UNITED STATES

United States House of Representatives

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on Water and Power

The Honorable Ken Calvert, Chairman

Testimony of Gloria P. Morales

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

As you may remember, my name is Gloria Morales. I appreciate the opportunity to again testify before your Subcommittee as I did a few weeks ago in Tulare, California.

I am a former farm worker and farmer, and I am a businesswoman in Fresno, California. I am a member of the State of California Reclamation Board and I'm very familiar with the issue at hand. I know what life is like in the San Joaquin Valley and water is one of our most critical needs. Our valley is the world's greatest garden and Fresno County alone produces some 250 crops. In simple terms, we feed the nation and the world.

However, things would be quite different if one of our greatest generations of farsighted pioneers and visionary leaders did not take steps to develop the desert of the San Joaquin Valley into an oasis of farmlands through California's Central Valley Project.

Today, Ladies and Gentlemen, the need has again arisen to be farsighted and visionary.

I was a farmer for 20 years. I understand what we need to grow, harvest and market California's crops. As a businessperson for three decades, I understand the importance of the agricultural economy to my customers. I have ground-level knowledge of how agriculture works and what it means to the farm workers who help make our agricultural economy function.

Let me speak a moment about the farm workers because, frankly, these hard working people are all too often forgotten when water and other farm-related issues are debated. According to the *Migrant And Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study For California*, as of September 2000, the San Joaquin Valley had some 400,000 migrant and seasonal farm worker jobs. These jobs are filled by people who depend entirely upon agriculture for their livelihood - most of whom are members of California's fastest growing ethnic population, Hispanic. Furthermore, many new businesses, job creation, new housing, and other economic activity depend upon these farm workers and agriculture in general. However, **none** of these activities can continue if we do not have enough water to sustain our state's agriculture and support California's population growth.

Beneficiaries of additional water storage go beyond our agricultural community:

They include the many environmental groups who fervently want to enhance the San Joaquin River below Friant Dam by providing a source of water to restore flows and improve water quality.

They include those whose lands and communities need improved flood protection.

They include those who depend upon groundwater which needs to be recharged due to consistent overdraft.

They include all of us who need and use electricity by providing a supplemental source of Western and valley power.

They include those who enjoy water-related recreation.

They include farmers, farm workers, farm communities, and all those who consume food and fiber grown on valley farms.

Finally, beneficiaries of water storage include all of us.

As you can see, beneficiaries of water storage include every one of us in this room.

To serve these vital beneficiaries and needs, now is the time to invest in our water infrastructure. I believe all beneficiaries must pay their proportional share, but we need your help in authorizing and appropriating funds to maintain and improve these social, economic and environmental needs.

I am heartened by the renewed recognition being shown by Congress in California's water needs. I'm encouraged by the CalFed Bay-Delta Program studies on additional California water storage -- including the upper San Joaquin River and the House's recent approval of \$2 million to continue the feasibility study of the Temperance Flat Dam and Reservoir. I applaud the efforts of Chairman Calvert, members of this subcommittee, the members of our valley's Congressional delegation and others who recognize the need for additional storage. I urge the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Interior to recognize the need and support for storage, and incorporate these needs in the new Water 2025 initiative.

Increased water storage is important to all of us. We simply cannot permit our nation to lose its ability to provide nutrition for itself and many around the world. We need to be growing more -- not less -- safe and affordable food. We should not be beholden to the world to feed us. Without water, we face this dire situation.

Again, simply speaking No Water = No Jobs. I ask that you direct your collective efforts toward authorizing and funding our water storage needs. As I acknowledged in Tulare, it will take years to make new storage a reality but in these past few moments our population has already grown. Now is the time to act.

May we again be farsighted and visionary. Let us be wise and make additional water storage in our region the number one priority to resolve. Thank you.